



SCHOOL PROGRAM

THE JOY

BRITTANY PHELAN AND KELSEY SERWA

(Grade 6 and up)



SPORT DESCRIPTION

In ski cross, skiers race down a snowy course with jumps, banks, rollers, and turns. Four skiers race head-to-head to see who can get to the finish line the fastest. The top two skiers then proceed to the next round. This continues until the best racers face off in the final.

It is an unpredictable event. Contact between the skiers or a sudden fall by another athlete can ruin your chances at gold. Tactics are key, as the skiers must negotiate their way around the other athletes as they race over the course features.

Although it's only been an Olympic event since 2010, Canada has already won four gold and two silver medals.



ABOUT THE ATHLETE

BRITTANY PHELAN AND KELSEY SERWA:

Two-time Olympic medallist **Kelsey Serwa**, 28, from Kelowna, British Columbia won gold at PyeongChang 2018, leading Canada's second straight 1-2 finish in women's ski cross as she shared the podium with silver medallist teammate **Brittany Phelan**, 26, from Mont-Tremblant, Quebec.

"We won the Olympics together, gushed Kelsey. I think it's that friendship that brought us to this spot."



THE STORY

BRITTANY PHELAN AND KELSEY SERWA

(Grade 6 and up)

As they stood at the bottom of the ski cross course, it was pure joy. Kelsey Serwa had won gold and her best friend Brittany Phelan had grabbed silver. Their smiles were a mile wide!

“We won the Olympics together,” gushed Kelsey. “I think it’s that friendship that brought us to this spot.”

Kelsey is from Kelowna, British Columbia. *“Growing up I didn’t have the dream of becoming an Olympian because it seemed so far out of reach,”* she explains.

Brittany grew up on the other side of the country in Mont Tremblant, Quebec. *“I had been dreaming of going to the Olympics since I was 4 years old. My parents would only get television during the Olympics, and I always knew I wanted to be an Olympic ski racer.”*

After starting out as alpine skiers they both switched to the sport of ski cross. By the time they met Kelsey had already won an Olympic ski cross medal. It didn’t take long for them to become best friends and close teammates. *“Kelsey has taught me everything in the sport,”* Brittany says.

Although the two athletes started in different places, they soon found themselves on the same path. They both understood that gold in PyeongChang would go to the athlete with the confidence to handle the pressure on the day. Confidence came from hard training and preparation. *“Britt always says, ‘There’s no need to be nervous when you’re prepared,’”* Kelsey says.

Both women had suffered serious injuries in

their ski careers, but they worked tirelessly to come back. It was through these difficult times that their persistence developed. *“Believing in yourself deep down is what makes it possible to get back up time and time again,”* explains Kelsey. *“To me that’s what persistence is. It’s so important to see every challenge as another opportunity to reach your goal.”*

During the year leading up to the Games, they constantly trained together and pushed each other on and off the snow. They were an inseparable team with a single goal of getting gold, and even the rigours of training were fun. They were motivated by each other’s hard work.

“No one works harder than Kelsey does,” says Brittany. *“Except Britt,”* Kelsey laughs.

They headed to PyeongChang in the best shape of their lives. In the sport of ski cross, a lot of things can go wrong. Jostling among the skiers or a fallen athlete ahead can ruin the race you’ve trained for the previous four years. They could only do their best on the day.

Even in PyeongChang where they knew they would be competing against each other, they still acted like teammates. On race day in PyeongChang they were both awake at 5AM, working together to study the course conditions. At the starting gate before the final they bumped fists and began chanting their now familiar cheer of *“Here we go!”*

Off the start, all the skiers were bunched together. Kelsey was off to a fast pace and raced to the front. Her lead opened. Brittany was stuck in fourth place behind two

other competitors. Getting around the other two skiers looked impossible until they bumped against each other, causing them to slow down. *“I saw my chance and I took it,”* Brittany says. She raced past them both. She was now in second place heading toward the finish line behind her best friend. *“Once we were over the last jump,”* recalls Britt, *“I was like, ‘we did it!’”*

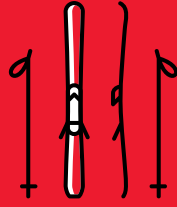
Kelsey had won the gold medal and Brittany had won the silver. *“We won the Olympics together,”* exclaims Kelsey. *“I think it’s that camaraderie, that friendship that helped bring us to this spot.”*

Their friendship and commitment to each other pushed each of them to work harder for the gold medal performance. Together they developed a work ethic that made them the top two in the world

Brittany believes that this incredible work ethic helps off the snow as well. *“There’s a lot of other things I’m not as good at, like computer work,”* she says. *“I don’t enjoy it at all. But I try to take my work ethic into everything I do, especially the things I don’t enjoy as much.”*

It’s pure joy when you have a friend to bring out your best. They encourage you to work harder and to be a better person.





LEARNING

ACTIVITIES (Grade 6 and up)

1.THEIR JOY

a. Kelsey and Britt are best of friends. Re-read the story and look for ways that they were good friends for each other. **In pairs, brainstorm a list of things they did that make them good friends.**

b. **Write a journal entry about ways that their friendship helped them both ski well at the Olympic Games.** What do you think that Kelsey meant when she said that “we won the Olympics together”?



